

Feb. 8, 2017

HEALTH OFFICIALS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY CONFIRM STAPH AUREUS IN PULLED PORK SAMPLE, 55 REPORTS OF ILLNESS TO DATE



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Lake City, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Columbia County is continuing to work with local school officials to investigate a foodborne illness cluster following a science competition held at Florida Gateway College in Lake City on Feb. 4, 2017. The lunch served at the science competition is being investigated as the potential source of the illnesses.

Leftover samples of pulled pork, smoked chicken, macaroni salad, chicken sandwiches and baked beans from the science competition were delivered by the Florida Department of Health in Columbia County to the Bureau of Public Health Laboratories (BPHL) on Feb. 6, 2017. The food samples were tested for the following bacteria: *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Bacillus cereus*.

Only the pulled pork sample tested positive. *S. aureus* was found at an amount well above the standard cutoff threshold used to confirm a foodborne illness outbreak.

S. aureus is a toxin producing bacteria, which can cause frequent episodes of vomiting with a quick onset (usually within 6 hours) after a meal is consumed. Symptoms often go away within 24 hours. Foodborne illness caused by *S. aureus* are not spread from person-to-person and only those who ate the meal served would have developed symptoms. It is important for those affected by foodborne illness to stay hydrated, rest and seek attention from a medical provider if their symptoms worsen or become severe.

Helpful web resources on *S. aureus* include:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/diseases/staphylococcal.html>
- FDA: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/causes/bacteriaviruses/staphylococcus/>

The Florida Department of Health in Columbia County is continuing to conduct public health interviews with those who consumed this meal. To report a foodborne illness related to the lunch served at the science competition please contact Sallie Ford, Columbia County Environmental Health Director, at 386-758-1058.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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